

Trade Descriptions

by [James Stevens Curl](#) (August 2023)



Arab Slave Traders. A 19th-century engraving depicting an Arab slave-trading caravan transporting black African slaves across the Sahara. The trans-Saharan slave trade developed in the 7th and 8th centuries as Muslim Arabs conquered most of North Africa. The trade grew significantly from the 10th to the 15th century and peaked in the mid-19th century.

The fact that no equivalent of the [Trade Descriptions Act](#) of 1968 applies to political parties has struck me as curious, remiss, and unfortunate, given that in these benighted times the Party claiming to be 'Conservative' rarely conserves anything (indeed it usually does the opposite), and that Labour no longer represents the British 'white' working

classes, who have been consigned to the dustheap of dependency, poverty, and ignorance, not least because Critical Race Theory defines racism according to a strict binary in which any group deemed to be 'white' can never be among the alleged 'victims.' Another obvious factor has been the appalling failure of the 'world-class education system' claimed by professional 'educators' and politicians, which is nothing of the sort, but in fact a massive confidence-trick. Having worked in Higher Education I know what I am talking about. Furthermore, the modern Labour Party, like the rest of those claiming to be of the Left, seems to believe in a hierarchy of victimhood which deliberately plays down anti-Semitism on the grounds that Jews are 'white,' which is absurd, as there are plenty of Jews who are 'of colour' to a greater or lesser degree. The grim history of anti-Semitism over the centuries has not deterred members of the British Labour Party from giving voice to repulsive prejudices and vile opinions.

Recent developments demonstrate beyond doubt that the distorted 'anti-racism' of the Labour Party contains a massive charge of anti-Jewishness within it, heavily disguised as antipathy towards Zionism, and spiced with anti-Capitalist perceptions that are not unrelated to hatred of Jews and of Jewish success in finance and commerce. Attempts by Labour politicians to claim they represent the 'Party of Business' ring hollow, as some of those same politicians (including the Party's leader) only recently endorsed Comrade Corbyn's economic crypto-Communism and also made excuses for other unappetising aspects of his stances. But in fact the Left has always had at its heart the intention of destroying the free market economy, something that looks more and more within its grasp, given the failure of Welfare Capitalism, the very obvious deterioration of the environment through pollution of various kinds (which is beginning to alarm even a supine electorate), the reckless printing of money on a scale that makes the finances of the Weimar Republic look prudent and has

actually led to massive *de facto* inflation (which pundits absurdly blame on everything from Putin to Covid, in fact anything other than the actual trigger), and a general failure of nerve on all fronts. Most concerning of all, nobody seems to be giving any thought as to how an ever-expanding Welfare State is to be supported without massive rises in taxation, given the end of an era of Cheap Money and, even more concerning, why does nobody seem to be able to grasp that the biggest elephant in the room, one that affects climate-change, the use of scarce resources, the economy, the availability of accommodation, food, and water, and much, much more, is that there are far too many people, and that the population is growing at a rate that resources and the economy cannot possibly sustain? Even Sir David Attenborough, in recent broadcasts, has noticeably avoided the subject, yet it is a prime cause of many of the major problems the world faces today.

Now that the New Left makes no attempts to conceal its contempt for the 'white' working class, having given up on it as a means to gaining power, it has turned to Race, Gender, the distortion of History, the infiltration of every institution, charity, or group, and the corruption of Language as suitable weapons to achieve its ends. Central to its concerns with Race is Slavery, but here it is only interested in enslaved Africans and their descendants: missing entirely from that narrative is the sale of their people to Arab traders by African chiefs, of course. And what about Barbary pirates scouring the seaports of Britain for slaves to grab and sell to clients in North Africa, the Ottoman Empire, etc.? The huge Arabic coin hoards found in Poland even suggest that the huge successes of Mieszko I (r.960-92) in establishing a powerful Poland, linked to the West through religion, not least his military conquests, were partially bankrolled through Slavery, which existed over many centuries, in many societies, and in numerous parts of the world.

Recent obsessions with Slavery have suffered from gross distortion and advanced myopia. Conquerors and raiders (be they 'Vikings' or whatever) looked on human beings as booty, to be sold. Natives of what is now known as the Atlantic Archipelago were sold in the slave-markets of the time (of which Dublin was the largest), ending up in many places, including areas controlled by Islam. Slaves were more valuable than gold, silver, or artefacts, and most cultures of the past incorporated Slavery as an essential part of their economy: 'white' slaves were especially prized in certain parts of the world. Greece and Rome had well-established Slavery, and there was a slow transition from the later Roman Empire into Serfdom, which gradually disappeared in advanced communities, but from the latter part of the 15th century the Portuguese captured some Moors, which they sold to Moors in Africa in exchange for some Africans and some gold, and it seems to have been from that time that the infamous African Slave Trade began, initially largely involving Spanish interests in Haiti. English slave-traders were at first mainly occupied in supplying Spanish settlements, but from the second decade of the 17th century the main traffic was with British America, so that by 1790 the State of Virginia contained some 200,000 slaves of African descent. In the closing years of the 18th century, the main protagonists of the Transatlantic Slave Trade were British (the Scots by that time were as involved as the English, so it is unfair and untrue to apportion blame solely on Albion), French, Dutch, Portuguese, and Danish (the last were the first to abolish the Slave Trade, in 1792). At the Congress of Vienna in 1814 the principle of Abolition was acknowledged, and the Trade, so far as it was carried on under the flags of European nations or for the supply of their colonies, ceased to exist by the 1840s. But Slavery itself was not abolished in some countries, in the USA not until 1865, in French territories 1848 (although under the Revolution Slavery was abolished, only to be reinstated under Napoléon), areas under Portuguese jurisdiction in 1878, in Dutch colonies in

1863, and in Russia, Serfdom, which was almost Slavery, was not abolished until 1861.

However, slaves were still required in Africa, not only for the internal market, but for export to Turkey, Zanzibar, Egypt, Morocco, Bangazi, Arabia, Abyssinia, and Iran, something completely ignored by ignorant virtue-signallers. In many Muslim countries, and indeed in Christian Abyssinia, Slavery was intimately interwoven into the social fabric. British Imperialism has been a target for abuse, but to give just one example in its favour (ignored, of course), the internal Slave Trade in the Eastern Sudan had been severely disrupted by the suppression of the Turco-Egyptian traders by Sir Samuel White Baker (1821-93) and Charles George Gordon (1833-85), but this was reversed under the sanguinary rule of Mohammed Ahmed Ibn Seyyid Abdullah (1843-85), called 'The Mahdi,' who established an empire there until it was ended by Horatio Herbert Kitchener (1850-1916) at Omdurman in 1898.

And more recent history reveals that Slavery has existed on an industrial scale in both the Soviet Union and National Socialist Germany, and even today, on a domestic scale, in these islands. There are some who would suggest that low levels of pay in today's Britain are a form of slavery: that is a topic for debate, but I would suggest there really is no comparison at all, just as there is none when considering what is regarded as 'poverty' today compared with what it was a century and a half ago.

Recently, the Labour MP for Streatham has demanded 'a full and meaningful apology for our country's role in slavery and colonialism, and commit to reparatory justice.' No such demands have been issued to either the African tribes whose Chieftains sold their peoples into Slavery, or to the descendants of Arab traders who profited hugely from the whole business. Significantly, apologies have been demanded for the people of African descent, living and dead, but there has not been any demand made to those countries and cultures which

raided the coasts of these islands for slaves then taken for sale to the markets of North Africa, the Ottoman Empire, or other places. Given that Britain was among the first European countries to abolish Slavery, and probably the most important *enforcer* of that abolition through its Royal Navy and other weapons, these demands appear rather as one-sided hypocrisy.

I am reminded of observations Alexis-Charles-Henri-Maurice Clérel de Tocqueville (1805-59) made concerning the French Revolution, which should be a warning to us all. It was not 'until the strange and terrible physiognomy of the monster's head was visible; until it had destroyed civil as well as political institutions, manners, customs, laws, and even the mother tongue; until, having dashed in pieces the machine of government, it shook the foundations of society, and seemed anxious to assail even God Himself; until it overflowed the frontiers,, and, by dint of methods unknown before, ... overthrew the landmarks of Empires, broke Crowns, and crushed subjects'. Quite so. But where are the personalities in public life today willing to stand up to and oppose the destructive forces that are marshalling everywhere and battering at the gates of every institution they have not already infiltrated and corrupted? One only has to listen to the babblings of present-day announcers on the BBC to realise that our rich and wonderful language is under lethal assault, and those who should know better are affecting the *patois* of the barbarians.

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Professor Emeritus James Stevens Curl has many highly-acclaimed books to his credit, including *English Victorian Churches* (2022), *The Oxford Dictionary of Architecture* (2015, 2016), and *Making Dystopia; The Strange Rise and Survival of Architectural Barbarism* (2018, 2019). The last has recently

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